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THE FAR EASTERN TERRITORY

636 During the whole period from 1922 to 1937–38 the Soviet Far East enjoyed a special position within the Soviet Union. From the administrative point of view the Soviet Far East formed one large unit, the 'Far Eastern Territory' (F.E.T.). It covered roughly one-eighth of the entire surface of the U.S.S.R. The F.E.T. existed from January 1926 until October 1938, but there was a slight amputation of the territory in 1930, when the districts of Sreten and Chita were detached. Militarily, too, the Soviet Far East had a semi-independent existence by the establishment, in August 1929, of the Special Far Eastern Army ('Osobaya Dalnevostochnaya Armiya') usually referred to by its initials as ODVA and a year after its foundation as OKDVA (Osobaya Krasnoznamyonnaya Dalnevostochnaya Armiya', meaning 'Special Far Eastern Army decorated with the Order of the Red Banner').

Both army commanders and administrators in the Far East showed a considerable degree of independence, which, in some cases, even expressed itself in open opposition to the régime. This is true, in particular of the party leaders of Vladivostok, a city which, like that other opposition centre, Leningrad, was a window into the world. The radical course, aiming at the liquidation of the remnants of private property, which the Bolshevik Party took after its Fifteenth Congress (1927) did not meet with approval in a trading centre like Vladivostok. Both [661] Vladivostok and Chita became, in the late twenties, strongholds of a right-wing opposition and the Central Committee in Moscow had to dismiss the local party chiefs.[3]

185 578 Difficulties between the centre and the Far Eastern communists continued after the suppression of the right-wing deviation. Problems connected with the implementation of the First and Second Five-Year Plans were an almost inexhaustible source of disagreements. Already during the first Five-Year Plan period the State Planning Commission in Moscow had worked out big development schemes for the Far East, providing for the building of additional railways, an increase of coal and oil production, and far-reaching industrialization. When it became clear that many of the envisaged projects could not be carried out neither Moscow nor Khabarovsk wanted to take the blame for the failure. The central authorities complained about the inefficiency of the 'Far Easterners' and the latter denounced the lack of understanding of the officials at the centre. At the Sixteenth Party Congress, which was held in 1930, the spokesman of the F.E.T., Perepechko, referred to the 'hideous attitude of various central organizations' towards the economic problems of the Far East.[4] If it were not for this negligence, Perepechko asserted, the F.E.T. would carry out the basic tasks of the Five-Year

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185 578 Plan in three years. The later development showed that it took not three but ten years to reach the target figures which the first Five-Year Plan had fixed for the coal and oil production of the Far East.* The Central Government refused to admit that the shortcomings in the Far East resulted from deficiencies of all-Union planning, and tried to put the blame on local scapegoats who were charged with committing deliberate sabotage. More than that, the Central Government alleged that the Far Eastern administrators were 'Japanese spies', although they were, presumably, no more connected with Japan than the Leningrad opposition was linked with Germany. The Far Eastern communists, it is true, had shown great eagerness to establish commercial relations with other Pacific countries including Japan, but this had been done with the agreement of the centre.

THE PURGE OF THE 'CIVILIANS'

661 687 665 Although there was no evidence for charges of high treason the Soviet Government carried out a purge on a vast scale throughout the Soviet Far East. It would be incorrect to say that there was one big purge. There were at least two purges, one directed primarily against 'civilian' communists, and another aimed mainly at the army. The first purge, which was closely connected with economic shortcomings, started in the first months of 1937 and led to the disappearance of the head of the administration of the F.E.T., Krutov, and of the party secretary, Lavrentev. At the same time administrative heads and party officials were sacked all over the Soviet Far East. For many months there were no 'first secretaries' in many city committees and district committees of the Communist Party.

There is one aspect of the purge of the 'civilians' in the Far East which deserves special mention, the purge of the railwaymen. The railwaymen of the Far East were traditionally the backbone of the Communist Party in that distant part of the Soviet Union, and the solidity of Moscow's connection with the Pacific coastal areas depended largely on their efficiency. In the 'thirties' their job became increasingly difficult. Between 1933 and 1936 the freight turnover of the Far Eastern railways had increased three times. This was more than they could stand. The Far Eastern railway system broke down. A great many accidents occurred. The Government asserted that they were all engineered 'on instructions of the Japanese intelligence service.' The supreme responsibility for the wrecking of trains was officially attributed to Trotsky and to the

* Production of oil was to reach 464,000 tons by the end of the first Five-Year Plan in 1932. In 1933 output was 196,000 tons; in 1936, 308,000 tons, and in 1938, 360,000 tons. The coal target for 1932 was 4,000,000 tons. In 1933 output had reached 2,020,000 tons, and in 1936, 3,617,000 tons. The target for 1937 was 5,000,000 tons, but actual production in 1938 was only 4,750,000 tons.

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661 687 665 various members of the so-called 'Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites' which was allegedly led by Bukharin. In the Far East itself the Soviet Government staged a big trial of leading railway officials working on the Amur railway line, a sector of the Trans-Siberian railway. The trial took place in the town of Svobodny. All forty-four defendants were sentenced to death as 'Japanese spies'. They included the deputy head of the Amur railway line, the head of its planning department, the deputy head of the locomotive service and many other people of similar standing in the Far Eastern railway transport.[5] The sentence of Svobodny had considerable repercussions throughout the F.E.T. Sweeping changes took place not only in the top leadership of the Far Eastern railways but also among the rank and file of the railwaymen. Demobilized soldiers were rapidly trained for the railway and called upon to fill the gaps opened by the purges.

The man who, in 1937, carried out the purge in the Soviet Far East was a complete newcomer to the territory. His name was Vareikis, he was Lithuanian-born and had occupied various important positions in European Russia, as party secretary first of Voronezh and later of Stalingrad. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. When he arrived in Khabarovsk in the spring of 1937 he seemed to possess the full confidence of Stalin, but by the end of the year he had lost it. He was charged with surrounding himself with spies and white guardists. A case in point was the editor of the largest Far Eastern newspaper *Tikhookeanskaya Zvezda* (Far Eastern Star), Shver, who was expelled from the party by a special decision of the Central Committee taken at the beginning of October.[6] Vareikis survived his friend only by a few days.

THE PURGE OF THE FAR EASTERN ARMY

661 701 The disgrace of Vareikis and his supporters carried the disintegration of the party apparatus in the Far East a step further. Only one important force continued to exist in the F.E.T., the Special Far Eastern Army and its commander, Marshal Vasily Konstantinovich Blyukher. But it was clear that this last bulwark of Far Eastern 'autonomism' would, sooner or later, be affected by the big Stalinist clean up of Russia's military leadership. One of the defendants of the Tukhachevsky trial of June 1937, the commander of the Byelorussian Military District, Uborevich, had had important connections with the Far East. In 1922 he had been the liberator of Vladivostok and he had stayed in the F.E.T. for several years. There was another military person who was closely linked with Stalin's Far Eastern opponents, Gamarnik, the chief of the Political Administration of the Red Army and an Assistant People's Commissar for Defence. Had he not committed suicide he would most

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certainly have appeared in the Tukhachevsky trial. Gamarnik's presence in the Far East was frequently mentioned in the Soviet Press, the last time late in 1936, when he attended the autumn manœuvres of the OKDVA.[7] One of the last pictures which Soviet newspapers published of Gamarnik showed him with the Far Eastern deputies to the Eighth Congress of Soviets.[8] So there is no doubt that Gamarnik stood in close personal contact with some of the leading personalities of the F.E.T. It is possible that he had closer contacts with the civilian than with the military opposition in the Far East. This might explain why his fall from favour did not harm the Special Far Eastern Army directly, except for its political departments which were under Gamarnik's orders.[9] At any rate, the Tukhachevsky-Gamarnik *affaire* did not affect Blyukher's prestige immediately. Blyukher was even one of the judges who sent Tukhachevsky and his associates to the gallows: these judges, who also included Marshal Timoshenko and Marshal Budyonny, were officially referred to as 'the flower of our glorious army'.[10] In the months after the Tukhachevsky trial they served Bolshevik propaganda as examples that Stalin had not wiped out Russia'a entire military leadership.

It seems that in the winter of 1937–38, Blyukher and his army reached the culminating point of their power in the Far Eastern Territory. The influence of Blyukher and his army was particularly visible in the elections which took place in December 1937 for the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., the first to be held under the new Stalin Constitution. Out of the nine deputies which the F.E.T. sent to the Soviet of the Union four belonged to the OKDVA, including Blyukher himself and his deputy, Mikhail Karpovich Levandovsky, who commanded the troops of the maritime region around Vladivostok. The fifth deputy, a submarine commander, represented the Pacific Fleet.* The party, the administration and the N.K.V.D.† had one deputy each. Only the ninth deputy represented the common people. He was a Stakhanovite worker in the timber industry.

When the Soviet parliament met in January 1938 Blyukher was elected a member of its presidium. In the following month, on Red Army Day, he was awarded the 'Order of Lenin'. At the end of May a meeting of 6,500 workers and peasants nominated him as a candidate for the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the R.S.F.S.R.[11] Until the

* The Soviet Pacific Fleet was built up between 1932 and 1937. In the first years of the Soviet régime a Russian Pacific Fleet was as good as non-existent; until 1932 it included but one single gun-boat. Describing the situation at the time of the arrival in Vladivostok of the first Red Navy commander in the Pacific, M. V. Viktorov, *Pravda* said pointedly 'There was a commander, there was also a Pacific, but no Pacific Fleet' (*Pravda*, March 29th, 1937.) It was Viktorov's achievement to create a Soviet Pacific Fleet in a matter of four to five years. He too was eliminated in the big clean-up of 1937-38.

† The N.K.V.D., the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, later Ministry for Internal Affairs (M.V.D.) is the ministry responsible for the Soviet police.

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this early period of construction Komsomolsk had a street with the characteristic nickname of 'Street of Accidents', and a whole quarter was known as the 'Fire Settlement' ('Pozharny Posyolok').

Things in Komsomolsk went wrong for several years, and in 1937, when the city celebrated its fifth anniversary, the party authorities thought that the time had come to carry out a large-scale purge among the builders of the 'City of Youth'. One of the most distinguished citizens of the new town, the director of its metallurgical plant, then declared bluntly, 'We are mercilessly rooting out this scum of wreckers'.[19] 'This scum of wreckers' were people whom official Soviet propaganda had previously included among the selfless enthusiastic patriots engaged in self-sacrificing, heroic construction work. To justify the purge the party leadership alleged that 'agents of foreign intelligence services, bandits and diversionists' had penetrated into the ranks of workers and technicians of Komsomolsk, thanks to the complacency of certain leading personalities. According to the official version the 'enemies of the people' at work in Komsomolsk were very active and ingenious. They mixed concrete with sugar so that the degree of its cohesion was lowered, they put glass into ball-bearings to provoke accidents and destroyed vital blue-prints to delay the growth of local industry.

The real reason for the chaos in Komsomolsk was not the criminal activity of wreckers, but the lack of co-ordination between the various state trusts which owned the industrial enterprises in the town-to-be. Each of these trusts constructed a workers' settlement around its plant, and until 1940 there was no over-all building plan for the much advertised town of the Communist Youth League. This explains why sanitary conditions and municipal services were still practically non-existent, even by the outbreak of the Second World War.

The over-all building plan of Komsomolsk which came into being in 1940 provided for a population of 500,000.[20] Although the fulfilment of this aim is still far off, Komsomolsk has become an economic and cultural factor in the Far East. In 1947 the town had 100,000 inhabitants and was the proud owner of two undertakings of all-Union importance, the Iron and Steel Works, 'Amurstal', and a shipyard.[21] Cultural life, too, had developed greatly. The number of schools reached thirty-four in 1947 and forty-five in 1952. In addition, Komsomolsk has a Palace of Culture, a theatre, thirty libraries, a training college for teachers of secondary schools, a music school and four 'parks of culture and rest'.[22] It has tried to keep up its reputation as a 'City of Youth' and is still recruiting young workers from European Russia, particularly from among war orphans.

The second big Komsomol initiative for the settlement of the Far East, the Khetagurova movement, has its roots in the lack of women in the Far East and the necessity to remedy the situation. The well-

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have probably been exaggerated, partly to serve as an excuse for the inefficiency of Soviet administration and partly as a pretext for the anti-Shaman measures taken by the régime. The fight against the Shamans took the same forms as the campaign against other religions of the Soviet Union, ranging from ordinary anti-religious propaganda to administrative terror. The Far Northern cells of the League of Militant Godless were in charge of the former. In view of the complicated character of Shamanism it was no easy affair to combat it and a more thorough picture of its regional diversities had first to be obtained. The League of Militant Godless therefore urged its northern groups to compile a detailed register of the Shamans which was to answer the following questions about each of them: What is the range of activity of the Shaman? Is he a family Shaman or does a larger group of people avail itself of his services? What speciality does he have? Is he a sea-Shaman accompanying fishermen on their expeditions? Is he a tamer of snowstorms? Does he claim to have any influence on the results of hunting? Is he engaged in healing reindeer and people? What sort of cult objects does he possess? Drums? Costumes? Does he hold collective séances? What is his social origin? Detailed information about these and other points was to be sent at least twice a year to the Central Council of Militant Godless, Moscow, Sretenka Street Nr 10.[20]

It does not seem that the League of Militant Godless had many people on the spot with a sufficient knowledge of folklore and anthropology to carry out the 'registration of the Shamans' and it is more than likely that the whole scheme failed. Other anti-Shaman measures were more successful. For instance, pressure was brought to bear on Shamans to give a solemn pledge that they would renounce their activities. Collective statements of several Shamans were even published in the local Press stating that in the past they had been 'wreckers' and 'cheaters.'[21] In other cases where such self-recriminations could not be obtained, Shamans were expelled from their tribal territory or arrested and put on trial. By arresting Shamans the Soviet authorities wanted to show the people that they did not fear their power and that Shamans were not protected by the spirits.

Notwithstanding all these measures of intimidation and persecution the Shamans were still a fairly important factor at the time of the adoption of the Stalin Constitution of 1936. When the constitution was subject to a nationwide discussion the Shamans once more showed their anti-Soviet bias and they did so again during the elections to the Supreme Soviets of the U.S.S.R. and the R.S.F.S.R. in 1937 and 1939 respectively. According to Oleshchuk, one of the leaders of the League of Godless, the Shamans tried 'to falsify the Soviet Constitution, undermine the elections and exploit the electoral campaign for counter-revolutionary aims.'[22]

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538 756 It would appear from Soviet evidence that Shamanism experienced a certain revival during the war. Shamans, it is alleged, cunningly used the temporary absence of young communist educated people from the tribal areas to regain some of their former influence. The novel of the well-known Soviet writer Azhaev, *Far from Moscow*, which refers to conditions in a Nanai village contains, for instance, the following passage: 'He (the Shaman) had lain low for a time but resumed his evil practices when war broke out. He saw his chance to profit from the war by a crafty and insolent device. Many of the Nanai boys of the village had been called to the colours. They wrote letters home from the front, and the Shaman made his "prophecies" by these letters. His clients were mostly old women anxious about the fate of their sons, and he fleeced and fooled them to the top of his bent.'[23]

Soviet novels about post-war conditions in the Far East try to convey the impression that the Shamans have ceased to be figures that are respected and feared. The Shamans of these novels are desperately isolated and universally despised. In one case the Shaman is even an enemy agent whom the Americans have sent from Alaska to provoke 'acts of diversion' among the natives of the Soviet Far East.

Some of the Soviet charges made against the Shamans coincide more or less with the criticism which a Western colonial administrator would direct against the African witch-doctors and juju-men. Western and Soviet administrators will, however, often differ as to the way in which the Shaman and the juju-man are to be fought. In West Africa, though not in East Africa, the fight against the juju-man is no more than a campaign of enlightenment in favour of a more hygienic way of life. In other words it is an aim in itself. The fight against the Shaman in the Soviet Far East and Far North is only a small part of a great struggle which is aimed at crushing every kind of political and religious opposition.

THE FIGHT AGAINST CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

797 779 661 In the Far East and Far North the régime fights religion on 'two fronts'. If the liquidation of Shamanism is one aim of communist anti-religious policy, the total prevention of Christian missionary activities is another.

Christianity has had a certain influence on the small nationalities of the Far East. Missionaries preaching the faith in a God who loves and helps man, have tried with some success to oust from the hearts of the natives that deep-rooted fear which is accompanied by belief in evil spirits. But the work of the missionaries was far from being finished when the Soviet authorities interrupted it. As it often happens in Africa, the superstitions of paganism survived even where the Church made formal converts. Those Lamuts of Kamchatka, for instance, who accepted the

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Christian faith, acquired Christian ikons, but did not want to part with 661 ●
their Shamanist idols. The same can be observed among other Far 779
Eastern and Far Northern aborigines. Many Christian converts wear 797
crosses around their necks, but, at the same time, have idols made of walrus bones and reindeer skin on their belts. Naturally the communists have thrown ridicule on this pagan-Christian dualism, which they have described as 'Shamanism-Orthodoxy', but it is an unavoidable transitory stage in the religious development of any primitive people. Certain sections of the northern tribes of Soviet Russia had been sufficiently Christianized at the time of the establishment of Soviet power to resent the forcible withdrawal of priests, and the removal from forests and ways of crosses which, in the popular belief gave protection against 'devils'. A protest lodged by a group of natives of the Beryozovo district in North-western Siberia was characteristic in this respect. The natives in question wrote a letter complaining that the local communist secretary did not allow them to have a priest. Their actual words were: We can't do without a priest because this is our faith.' ('My ne mozhem bez popa potomu chto vera nasha takaya'.) The letter of protest was printed in 1934 in *Revolyutsiya i Natsionalnosti*, the official organ of the Soviet of Nationalities as a general illustration of the fact that priests still enjoyed confidence in certain parts of the Far North.*

Today most of the Far Eastern tribes are outside the reach of those 661
reduced activities which are still permitted to the Russian Orthodox 779
Church in the U.S.S.R. Whilst churches are tolerated in old towns where their existence is traditional, it has been the consistent policy of the Soviet Government not to allow Christian houses of worship to be erected in the so-called 'socialist cities' which are the products of the Soviet period. In the Far East this applies to Magadan and Komsomolsk, places which among their polyglot population count quite a number of detribalized natives. Members of the two larger nationalities of the Soviet Far East, Yakuts and Buryat-Mongols, are, as far as they are converts to Christianity, in a better position than the members of the smaller tribes. There are churches in the capitals of Yakutia and Buryat-Mongolia and presumably also in other localities of these Republics. These are under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan of Irkutsk and Chita, whose diocese is larger than the whole of Western Europe.

STALIN – THE SUN

Against Shamanism and Christianity the Soviet régime uses one and the 208
same metaphysical antidote – the Lenin-Stalin cult. In the territories of 773
the Far Eastern tribes this cult has a particularly colourful variant. It takes the form of folk-tales which depict Lenin and Stalin as 'super-

* *Revolyutsiya i Natsionalnosti*, Nr 53, July 1934, pp. 51–57.